

The Sunday School

LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 18

BY THE EDITOR

The Call of Matthew. Matt. 9:9-17

GOLDEN TEXT.—Follow me.—Matt. 9:9.

LESSON THOUGHT.—Jesus is calling men from the lowest as well as from the highest stations in life to follow him and do service for him.

Home Readings

The servant healed, Matt. 8:1-13.
The tempest stilled, Matt. 8:14-34.
The call of Matthew, Matt. 9:1-17.
The dead raised, etc., Matt. 9:18-26.
The blind saw, etc., Matt. 9:27-28.
I desired mercy, etc., Hosea 6:1-11.
Giving up all for Christ, Phil. 3:1-21.

Introductory Notes

The call of Matthew, tho it is recorded in his gospel after the sermon on the Mount, yet it is generally supposed that it occurred before, for Matthew was one of the twelve apostles who were chosen from among the disciples before that great sermon was delivered. The feast which Matthew gave at his own house is supposed to be at its proper place in the narrative.

Meaning of the Text

9 *Passed forth.* From his house in Capernaum where he had healed a paralytic. *Matthew.* He was a publican, Luke 5:27, and in business went by the name of Levi. *Matthew* means, the gift of God. *Receipt of custom.* At the custom house where he collected taxes on fish or duties on the merchandise which passed along the roads to Jerusalem, Tyre and Damascus.

10 *Came to pass.* Several weeks after the call of Matthew. *At meat.* It was in the house of Matthew who had made a feast in honor of Christ and invited publicans and sinners. To the former Matthew belonged and he wanted them to enjoy the same blessing he now enjoyed.

11 *Pharisees saw it.* They were not guests, but they were there as lookers on. They were sinners no less than the publicans, only in a different way. *Eateth,* etc. The charge was not for teaching sinners and publicans but for eating with them which in their opinion put him on a social equality with them.

12, 13 *Jesus heard* that the Pharisees found fault with him: he said in answer to their charge. *Be whole.* Who are strong and hearty, enjoying good health, as the Pharisees supposed themselves to be. Such do not need a *physician.* Christ was the great physician of the soul and as such he goes where the sick are found. *Go ye.* Go to the Scriptures and learn what it teaches. *Mercy—sacrifice.* Sacrifice was all right when it followed as the result of a broken heart, but the external forms of religion without deeds of kindness, love and mercy, are not acceptable to God.

14, 15 *Came—disciples.* According to Mark the disciples of John and the Pharisees were fasting at that very time. It was at the banquet of Matthew, and perhaps the fasting of the hungry on-lookers suggested the question. Why etc. *Mourn,* as expressed by fasting. "It was wholly incongruous, and could be only a form. Jesus' reply means that fasting, to be real, must not be a mere form, but the outward expression of a deep and sincere sorrow for sin. He, the Bridegroom, was with his disciples, and they should rejoice rather than fast." *Days will come.* At his death, when fasting will be but the natural expression of the sad and troubled heart.

16, 17 *New Cloth,* etc. The meaning is that the new patch on the old cloth would shrink and make the rent worse. *Old bottles.* Wine-skins, that is skins of animals, used as bottles. *Break.* The pressure of the gasses would break the old bottles. The principle taught seems to be, that the forms and ceremonies and sacrifices of the former dispensation were right and good in their place and time. But the gospel with its new life and freedom and spirit and light, must break away from these old forms which have long ago served their purpose.

The Lesson Applied

Christ's Call.—Christ is always calling men and women into service. He called Matthew more than eighteen hundred years ago, and he is calling you to-day. If you are already in his service, he calls you to a higher life, to a deeper work of grace in the heart, and to a more efficient service. He is not ashamed to ask one like Matthew to become his follower. He will take into his closest friendship those whom the world despises. Matthew was a despised publican, but he came to Christ and under his influence and teaching he became a great man whose name shines brightly wherever the Bible finds a place. Let no one be discouraged. Divine grace can lift from the lowest depth of sin, to the highest glory of holiness.

2 *Prompt Obedience.*—There is something remarkable in the words, "And he arose and followed him." He asked no question as to what following him meant. He was weary of his life of sin, and especially weary of the world's hate. It was an example of prompt obedience; he believed Christ and followed him. It is thus that all of us should obey. When Christ bids us follow him we may safely put ourselves into his hands, for he will lead us into heavenly places.

3 *Told His Friends.*—Matthew made a feast in honor of Christ, and to this feast he invited not the Pharisee and respectable people, but publicans and sinners, those who had associated with him in his former life. We may imagine how he told them of God's love to him, how Christ had helped him and made him a better and happier man. This is what we should do when we are saved from sin, tell those who live in sin as we

used to. Tell them of the wondrous love of Jesus, how he came and died for them.

4 *New Religion.*—Christ did not come to patch up the old Jewish religion. He came to us with a new revelation, a revelation of the love of God in its fullness. He puts new wine into new bottles. His religion is not mere patch work, it is not putting new patches on an old worn out life. He makes the old life new, and then puts all the new things into the new life, fills it up full to overflowing.

To Make You Think

1. Where did Jesus first meet Matthew?
2. By what other name was he known?
3. What was his occupation?
4. How was he regarded by the Jews?
5. Why did they hate such men?
6. Why did Jesus call such men into his service?
7. In what way would Matthew's occupation help him or how did it better fit him for the duties to which Christ called him?
8. Who made a feast in honor of Jesus?
9. Was it right for Jesus to accept an invitation to this feast?
10. Who found fault with him?
11. Who else was at the feast?
12. What did Jesus reply to the Pharisees' complaining?
13. What was Christ's mission into the world?
14. What does Paul say of this mission?
- 1 Timothy 1:15.
15. What are represented by the new cloth and the old garment?
16. What by the new wine and the old bottles?

What You Can Do

1. Accept Jesus' call to a higher life.
2. Invite all classes to come to Jesus.
3. Tell sinners of Christ's love to them.
4. Look for the good things in others.
5. Make religion attractive to others.
6. Break away from old forms.

Thoughts for Young People

Some Inferences from this Lesson

1. *No business is to bad to leave.* Men and women who have sadly slid far down the social scale, into the despised classes, such as gamblers, liquor dealers, drunkards, or, below all classes, among the outcasts, not infrequently are stricken with deep and tender penitence; but Satan, who adapts his temptations to the conditions of each soul, suggests to such that they are too low or too vile to follow Jesus. Thank God! the beautiful stories of Matthew, and Zaccheus, and "the thief on the cross," and "the woman who was a sinner" are blessed parables to teach such sorrowing and shame-stricken souls that Jesus does not care where a man or a woman comes from, but it is full of the tenderest solicitude about where he or she is going to. Take this thought to your own hearts, young people, and proclaim it to others, for it grew out of the very kernel of the Gospel; not the "whole," but the sick; not the righteous, but sinners. There is sound logic in Dr. Bethune's beautiful couplet:

"No sinner worse than I can be,
Therefore I know He died for me."

2. *God will have mercy, and not sacrifice.* He will have love, not merely behavior.